

THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE BY A. E.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation





THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE, LYRICAL
POEMS OLD AND NEW BY 'A.E.'

George Russell

'A.E.'

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILL. 60607

1978

25

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
Prologue	1
The Nuts of Knowledge	3
Immortality	4
The Hermit	4
The Great Breath	5
The Divine Vision	6
The Burning Glass	7
A Vision of Beauty	7
Rest	10
The Earth Breath	11
Divine Visitation	12
The Master Singer	12
Aphrodite	13
Illusion	15
Babylon	15
Alter Ego	17
Krishna	18
Symbolism	19
Sung on a By-Way	20
The Hunter	20
The Vision of Love	21
A Call of the Sidhe	22
Janus	23
The Grey Eros	24
The Memory of Earth	25
By the Margin of the Great Deep	26

Three Counsellors,	27
Desire	28
The Place of Rest	29
Sacrifice	30
Reconciliation	30
Epilogue	32

The Manager of the Dun Emer Press has to thank
Mr John Lane for permission to reprint ten poems
from *Homeward Songs By The Way*, and ten from
The Earth Breath.

FOR BRIAN WHEN HE IS GROWN UP
THIS HANDFUL OF THE NUTS OF
KNOWLEDGE I HAVE GATHERED ON
THE SECRET STREAMS.

I thought, beloved, to have brought to you
A gift of quietness and ease and peace,
Cooling your brow as with the mystic dew
Dropping from twilight trees.

Homeward I go not yet; the darkness grows;
Not mine the voice to still with peace divine:
From the first fount the stream of quiet flows
Through other hearts than mine.

Yet of my night I give to you the stars,
And of my sorrow here the sweetest gains,
And out of hell, beyond its iron bars,
My scorn of all its pains.

1. The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the English language. It deals with the various stages of the language, from its earliest forms to the present day. It also discusses the influence of other languages on English, and the role of English in the world today.

2. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the grammar of the English language. It covers the various parts of speech, and the rules governing their use. It also discusses the various tenses and moods of the verb, and the various forms of the noun and adjective.

3. The third part of the book is devoted to a study of the vocabulary of the English language. It discusses the various sources of new words, and the various meanings of words. It also discusses the various idioms and phrases of the language, and the various styles of writing.

THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE

A cabin on the mountain side hid in a grassy nook
Where door and windows open wide that friendly
stars may look.

The rabbit shy can patter in, the winds may enter
free,

Who throng around the mountain throne in living
ecstasy.

And when the sun sets dimmed in eve and purple
fills the air,

I think the sacred Hazel Tree is dropping berries
there

From starry fruitage waved aloft where Connla's
Well o'erflows;

For sure the enchanted waters pour through every
wind that blows.

I think when night towers up aloft and shakes the
trembling dew

How every high and lonely thought that thrills my
being through

Is but a ruddy berry dropped down through the
purple air,

And from the magic tree of life the fruit falls every-
where.

IMMORTALITY

We must pass like smoke or live within the spirit's
fire;

For we can no more than smoke unto the flame re-
turn

If our thought has changed to dream, our will unto
desire,

As smoke we vanish though the fire may burn.

Lights of infinite pity star the grey dusk of our days:

Surely here is soul: with it we have eternal breath:

In the fire of love we live, or pass by many ways,

By unnumbered ways of dream to death.

THE HERMIT

Now the quietude of earth

Nestles deep my heart within;

Friendships new and strange have birth

Since I left the city's din.

Here the tempest stays its guile,

Like a big kind brother plays,

Romps and pauses here awhile

From its immemorial ways.

Now the silver light of dawn

Slipping through the leaves that fleck

My one window, hurries on,
Throws its arms around my neck.

Darkness to my doorway hies,
Lays her chin upon the roof,
And her burning seraph eyes
Now no longer keep aloof.

Here the ancient mystery
Holds its hands out day by day,
Takes a chair and croons with me
By my cabin built of clay.

When the dusky shadow flits,
By the chimney nook I see
Where the old enchanter sits,
Smiles, and waves, and beckons me.

THE GREAT BREATH

Its edges foamed with amethyst and rose,
Withers once more the old blue flower of day:
There where the ether like a diamond glows
Its petals fade away.

A shadowy tumult stirs the dusky air;
Sparkle the delicate dews, the distant snows;
The great deep thrills for through it everywhere
The breath of beauty blows.

I saw how all the trembling ages past,
Moulded to her by deep and deeper breath,
Neared to the hour when Beauty breathes her last
And knows herself in death.

THE DIVINE VISION

This mood hath known all beauty for it sees
O'erwhelmed majesties
In these pale forms, and kingly crowns of gold
On brows no longer bold,
And through the shadowy terrors of their hell
The love for which they fell,
And how desire which cast them in the deep
Called God too from his sleep.
O, pity, only seer, who looking through
A heart melted like dew,
Seest the long perished in the present thus,
For ever dwell in us.
Whatever time thy golden eyelids ope
They travel to a hope;
Not only backward from these low degrees
To starry dynasties,
But, looking far where now the silence owns
And rules from empty thrones,
Thou seest the enchanted halls of heaven burn
For joy at our return.

Thy tender kiss hath memory we are kings
For all our wanderings.
Thy shining eyes already see the after
In hidden light and laughter.

THE BURNING GLASS

A shaft of fire that falls like dew,
And melts and maddens all my blood,
From out thy spirit flashes through
The burning glass of womanhood.

Only so far; here must I stay:
Nearer I miss the light, the fire:
I must endure the torturing ray,
And, with all beauty, all desire.

Ah, time-long must the effort be,
And far the way that I must go
To bring my spirit unto thee,
Behind the glass, within the glow.

A VISION OF BEAUTY

Where we sat at dawn together, while the star-rich
heavens shifted,
We were weaving dreams in silence, suddenly the
veil was lifted.

By a hand of fire awakened, in a moment caught and
led

Upward to the wondrous vision: through the star-
mists overhead

Flare and flaunt the monstrous highlands; on the
sapphire coast of night

Fall the ghostly froth and fringes of the ocean of the
light.

Many coloured shine the vapours: to the moon-eye
far away

'Tis the fairy ring of twilight mid the spheres of
night and day,

Girdling with a rainbow cincture round the planet
where we go,

We and it together fleeting, poised upon the pearly
glow;

We and it and all together flashing through the
starry spaces

In a tempest dream of beauty lighting up the place
of places.

Half our eyes behold the glory: half within the
spirit's glow

Echoes of the noiseless revels and the will of beauty
go.

By a hand of fire uplifted — to her star-strewn palace
brought,

To the mystic heart of beauty and the secret of her thought:

Here of yore the ancient mother in the fire mists sank to rest,

And she built her dreams about her, rayed from out her burning breast:

Here the wild will woke within her lighting up her flying dreams,

Round and round the planets whirling break in woods and flowers and streams,

And the winds are shaken from them as the leaves from off the rose,

And the feet of earth go dancing in the way that beauty goes,

And the souls of earth are kindled by the incense of her breath

As her light alternate lures them through the gates of birth and death.

O'er the fields of space together following her flying traces,

In a radiant tumult thronging, suns and stars and myriad races

Mount the spirit spires of beauty, reaching onward to the day

When the Shepherd of the Ages draws his misty hordes away

Through the glimmering deeps to silence, and within the awful fold
Life and joy and love forever vanish as a tale is told,
Lost within the mother's being. So the vision flamed and fled,
And before the glory fallen every other dream lay dead.

REST

On me to rest, my bird, my bird:
The swaying branches of my heart
Are blown by every wind toward
The home whereto their wings depart.

Build not your nest, my bird, on me:
I know no peace but ever sway:
O, lovely bird, be free, be free,
On the wild music of the day.

But sometimes when your wings would rest,
And winds are laid on quiet eves:
Come, I will bear you breast to breast,
And lap you close with loving leaves.

THE EARTH BREATH

From the cool and dark-lipped furrow breathes a
dim delight

Through the woodland's purple plumage to the
diamond night.

Aureoles of joy encircle every blade of grass

Where the dew-fed creatures silent and enraptured
pass.

And the restless ploughman pauses, turns, and won-
dering,

Deep beneath his rustic habit finds himself a king;

For a fiery moment looking with the eyes of God

Over fields a slave at morning bowed him to the sod.

Blind and dense with revelation every moment flies.

And unto the mighty mother, gay, eternal, rise

All the hopes we hold, the gladness, dreams of things
to be.

One of all thy generations, mother, hails to thee.

Hail, and hail, and hail for ever, though I turn again

From thy joy unto the human vestiture of pain.

I, thy child who went forth radiant in the golden
prime,

Find thee still the mother-hearted through my night
in time:

Find in thee the old enchantment there behind the
veil

Where the gods, my brothers, linger. Hail, for ever
hail!

DIVINE VISITATION

The heavens lay hold on us: the starry rays
Fondle with flickering fingers brow and eyes:
A new enchantment lights the ancient skies.
What is it looks between us gaze on gaze?
Does the wild spirit of the endless days
Chase through my heart some lure that ever flies?
Only I know the vast within me cries
Finding in thee the ending of all ways.
Ah, but they vanish; the immortal train
From thee, from me, depart, yet take from thee
Memorial grace: laden with adoration
Forth from this heart they flow that all in vain
Would stay the proud eternal powers that flee
After the chase in burning exultation.

THE MASTER SINGER

A laughter in the diamond air, a music in the trem-
bling grass;
And one by one the words of light as joydrops
through my being pass.
I am the sunlight in the heart, the silver moonglow
in the mind;
My laughter runs and ripples through the wavy
tresses of the wind.
I am the fire upon the hills, the dancing flame that
leads afar

Each burning-hearted wanderer, and I the dear and
homeward star.

A myriad lovers died for me, and in their latest yield-
ed breath

I woke in glory giving them immortal life though
touched by death.

They knew me from the dawn of time: if Hermes
beats his rainbow wings,

If Angus shakes his locks of light, or golden-haired
Apollo sings,

It matters not the name, the land; my joy in all the
gods abides:

Even in the cricket in the grass some dimness of me
smiles and hides.

For joy of me the day star glows, and in delight and
wild desire

The peacock twilight rays aloft its plumes and
blossoms of shadowy fire,

Where in the vastness too I burn through summer
nights and ages long,

And with the fiery footed Watchers shake in myriad
dance and song.

APHRODITE

Not unremembering we pass our exile from the
starry ways:

One timeless hour in time we caught from the long
night of endless days.

With solemn gaiety the stars danced far withdrawn
on elfin heights:
The lilac breathed amid the shade of green and blue
and citron lights.
But yet the close enfolding night seemed on the
phantom verge of things,
For our adoring hearts had turned within from all
their wanderings:
For beauty called to beauty and there thronged at the
enchanter's will
The vanished hours of love that burn within the
Ever-living still.
And sweet eternal faces put the shadows of the earth
to rout,
And faint and fragile as a moth your white hand
fluttered and went out.
Oh, who am I who tower beside this goddess of the
twilight air?
The burning doves fly from my heart and melt with-
in her bosom there.
I know the sacrifice of old they offered to the mighty
queen,
And this adoring love has brought us back the beauty
that has been.
As to her worshippers she came descending from her
glowing skies
So Aphrodite I have seen with shining eyes look
through your eyes:

One gleam of the ancestral face which lighted up the
dawn for me:

One fiery visitation of the love the gods desire in
thee!

ILLUSION

What is the love of shadowy lips
That know not what they seek or press,
From whom the lure for ever slips
And fails their phantom tenderness?

The mystery and light of eyes
That near to mine grow dim and cold;
They move afar in ancient skies
Mid flame and mystic darkness rolled.

O, beauty, as thy heart o'erflows
In tender yielding unto me,
A vast desire awakes and grows
Unto forgetfulness of thee.

BABYLON

The blue dusk ran between the streets; my love was
winged within my mind;
It left to-day and yesterday and thrice a thousand
years behind.

To-day was past and dead for me for from to-day
my feet had run
Through thrice a thousand years to walk the ways
of ancient Babylon.
On temple top and palace roof the burnished gold
flung back the rays
Of a red sunset that was dead and lost beyond a mil-
lion days.
The tower of heaven turns darker blue; a starry
sparkle now begins;
The mystery and magnificence, the myriad beauty
and the sins
Come back to me. I walk beneath the shadowy mul-
titude of towers;
Within the gloom the fountain jets its pallid mist in
lily flowers.
The waters lull me, and the scent of many gardens,
and I hear
Familiar voices, and the voice I love is whispering
in my ear.
Oh real as in dream all this; and then a hand on mine
is laid:
The wave of phantom time withdraws; and that
young Babylonian maid,
One drop of beauty left behind from all the flowing
of that tide,

Is looking with the self-same eyes, and here in Ireland by my side.

Oh, light our life in Babylon, but Babylon has taken wings,

While we are in the calm and proud procession of eternal things.

ALTER EGO

All the morn a spirit gay

Breathes within my heart a rhyme,

'Tis but hide and seek we play

In and out the courts of Time.

Fairy lover, when my feet

Through the tangled woodland go,

'Tis thy sunny fingers fleet

Fleck the fire dewes to and fro.

In the moonlight grows a smile

Mid its rays of dusty pearl —

'Tis but hide and seek the while,

As some frolic boy and girl.

When I fade into the deep

Some mysterious radiance showers

From the jewel-heart of sleep

Through the veil of darkened hours.

Where the ring of twilight gleams
Round the sanctuary wrought,
Whispers haunt me—in my dreams
We are one yet know it not.

Some for beauty follow long
Flying traces; some there be
Seek thee only for a song:
I to lose myself in thee.

KRISHNA

‘I am Beauty itself among beautiful things.’

Bhagavad-Gita

The East was crowned with snow-cold bloom
And hung with veils of pearly fleece:
They died away into the gloom,
Vistas of peace — and deeper peace.

And earth and air and wave and fire
In awe and breathless silence stood;
For One who passed into their choir
Linked them in mystic brotherhood.

Twilight of amethyst, amid
Thy few strange stars that lit the heights,
Where was the secret spirit hid?
Where was Thy place, O Light of Lights?

The flame of Beauty far in space—
Where rose the fire: in thee? in me?
Which bowed the elemental race
To adoration silently?

SYMBOLISM

Now when the spirit in us wakes and broods,
Filled with home yearnings, drowsily it flings
From its deep heart high dreams and mystic moods,
Mixed with the memory of the loved earth things;
Clothing the vast with a familiar face;
Reaching its right hand forth to greet the starry race.

Wondrously near and clear the great warm fires
Stare from the blue; so shows the cottage light
To the field labourer whose heart desires
The old folk by the nook, the welcome bright
From the house-wife long parted from at dawn —
So the star villages in God's great depths withdrawn.

Nearer to Thee, not by delusion led,
Though there no house fires burn nor bright eyes
gaze,
We rise, but by the symbol charioted,
Through loved things rising up to Love's own ways

By these the soul unto the vast has wings
And sets the seal celestial on all mortal things.

SUNG ON A BY-WAY

What of all the will to do?
It has vanished long ago,
For a dream-shaft pierced it through
From the Unknown Archer's bow.

What of all the soul to think?
Some one offered it a cup
Filled with a diviner drink,
And the flame has burned it up.

What of all the hope to climb?
Only in the self we grope
To the misty end of time:
Truth has put an end to hope.

What of all the heart to love?
Sadder than for will or soul,
No light lured it on above;
Love has found itself the whole.

THE HUNTER

Twilight, a timid fawn, went glimmering by,
And night, the dark blue hunter, followed fast:

Ceaseless pursuit and flight were in the sky,
But the long chase had ceased for us at last.

We watched together while the driven fawn
Hid in the golden thicket of the day:
We from whose hearts pursuit and flight were gone
Knew on the hunter's breast her refuge lay.

THE VISION OF LOVE

The twilight fled away in pearl on the stream,
And night, like a diamond dome, stood still in our
dream.

Your eyes like burnished stones or as stars were
bright

With the sudden vision that made us one with the
night.

We loved in infinite spaces, forgetting here
The breasts that were lit with life and the lips so
near;

Till the wizard willows waved in the wind and
drew

Me away from the fulness of love and down to you.

Our love was so vast that it filled the heavens up:
But the soft white form I held was an empty cup,

When the willows called me back to earth with
their sigh,
And we moved as shades through the deep that was
you and I.

A CALL OF THE SIDHE

Tarry thou yet, late lingerer in the twilight's glory:
Gay are the hills with song: earth's faery children
leave

More dimabodes to roam the primrose-hearted eve,
Opening their glimmering lips to breathe some
wondrous story.

Hush, not a whisper! Let your heart alone go
dreaming.

Dream unto dream may pass: deep in the heart alone
Murmurs the Mighty One his solemn undertone.

Canst thou not see adown the silver cloudland stream-
ing

Rivers of faery light, dewdrop on dewdrop falling,
Starfire of silver flames, lighting the dark beneath?
And what enraptured hosts burn on the dusky
heath!

Come thou away with them, for Heaven to Earth
is calling.

These are Earth's voice — her answer — spirits
thronging.

Come to the Land of Youth: the trees grown heavy
there

Drop on the purple wave the starry fruit they bear.

Drink: the immortal waters quench the spirit's
longing.

Art thou not now, bright one, all sorrow past, in
elation,

Made young with joy, grown brother-hearted with
the vast,

Whither thy spirit wending flits the dim stars past
Unto the Light of Lights in burning adoration.

JANUS

Image of beauty, when I gaze on thee,

Trembling I waken to a mystery,

How through one door we go to life or death

By spirit kindled or the sensual breath.

Image of beauty, when my way I go;

No single joy or sorrow do I know:

Elate for freedom leaps the starry power,

The life which passes mourns its wasted hour.

And, ah, to think how thin the veil that lies

Between the pain of hell and paradise!

Where the cool grass my aching head embowers

God sings the lovely carol of the flowers.

THE GREY EROS

We are desert leagues apart;
Time is misty ages now
Since the warmth of heart to heart
Chased the shadows from my brow.

Oh, I am so old, meseems
I am next of kin to Time,
The historian of her dreams
From the long forgotten prime.

You have come a path of flowers.
What a way was mine to roam !
Many a fallen empire's towers,
Many a ruined heart my home.

No, there is no comfort, none;
All the dewy tender breath
Idly falls when life is done
On the starless brow of death.

Though the dream of love may tire,
In the ages long ago
There were ruby hearts of fire—
Ah, the daughters of the dawn !

Though I am so feeble now,
I remember when our pride
Could not to the Mighty bow;
We would sweep His stars aside.

Mix thy youth with thoughts like those —
It were but to wither thee,
But to graft the youthful rose
On the old and flowerless tree.

Age is no more near than youth
To the sceptre and the crown.
Vain the wisdom, vain the truth;
Do not lay thy rapture down.

THE MEMORY OF EARTH

In the wet dusk silver-sweet,
Down the violet scented ways,
As I moved with quiet feet
I was met by mighty days.

On the hedge the hanging dew
Glassed the eve and stars and skies;
While I gazed a madness grew
Into thundered battle cries.

Where the hawthorn glimmered white,
Flashed the spear and fell the stroke —
Ah, what faces pale and bright
Where the dazzling battle broke !

There a hero-hearted queen
With young beauty lit the van.
Gone! the darkness flowed between
All the ancient wars of man.

While I paced the valley's gloom
Where the rabbits pattered near,
Shone a temple and a tomb
With the legend carven clear:

'Time put by a myriad fates
That her day might dawn in glory.
Death made wide a million gates
So to close her tragic story.'

BY THE MARGIN OF THE GREAT DEEP
When the breath of twilight blows to flame the
misty skies,
All its vaporous sapphire, violet glow, and silver
gleam,
With their magic flood me through the gateway of
the eyes;
I am one with the twilight's dream.

When the trees and skies and fields are one in dusky
mood,
Every heart of man is wrapt within the mother's
breast:
Full of peace and sleep and dreams in the vasty quiet-
ude,
I am one with their hearts at rest.

From our immemorial joys of hearth and home and
love
Strayed away along the margin of the unknown tide,
All its reach of soundless calm can thrill me far above
Word or touch from the lips beside.

Aye, and deep and deep and deeper let me drink and
draw,
From the olden fountain more than light or peace
or dream,
Such primeval being as oerfills the heart with awe,
Growing one with its silent stream.

THREE COUNSELLORS

It was the fairy of the place,
Moving within a little light,
Who touched with dim and shadowy grace
The conflict at its fever height.

It seemed to whisper 'Quietness,'
Then quietly itself was gone:
Yet echoes of its mute caress
Were with me as the years went on.

It was the warrior within
Who called 'Awake, prepare for fight:
Yet lose not memory in the din:
Make of thy gentleness thy might:

'Make of thy silence words to shake
The long-enthroned kings of earth:
Make of thy will the force to break
Their towers of wantonness and mirth.'

It was the wise all-seeing soul
Who counselled neither war nor peace:
'Only be thou thyself that goal
In which the wars of time shall cease.'

DESIRE

With thee a moment! Then what dreams have
play!
Traditions of eternal toil arise,
Search for the high austere and lonely way
The Spirit moves in through eternities.
Ah, in the soul what memories arise!

And with what yearning inexpressible,
Rising from long forgetfulness I turn
To Thee, invisible, unrumoured, still:
White for Thy whiteness all desires burn.
Ah, with what longing once again I turn !

THE PLACE OF REST

'The soul is its own witness and its own refuge'

Unto the deep the deep heart goes,
It lays its sadness nigh the breast:
Only the Mighty Mother knows
The wounds that quiver unconfessed.

It seeks a deeper silence still;
It folds itself around with peace,
Where thoughts alike of good or ill
In quietness unfostered cease.

It feels in the unwounding vast
For comfort for its hopes and fears:
The Mighty Mother bows at last;
She listens to her children's tears.

Where the last anguish deepens — there
The fire of beauty smites through pain:
A glory moves amid despair,
The Mother takes her child again.

SACRIFICE

Those delicate wanderers,
The wind, the star, the cloud,
Ever before mine eyes,
As to an altar bowed,
Light and dew-laden airs
Offer in sacrifice.

The offerings arise:
Hazes of rainbow light,
Pure crystal, blue, and gold,
Through dreamland take their flight;
And 'mid the sacrifice
God moveth as of old.

In miracles of fire
He symbols forth his days;
In gleams of crystal light
Reveals what pure pathways
Lead to the soul's desire,
The silence of the height.

RECONCILIATION

I begin through the grass once again to be bound to
the Lord;
I can see, through a face that has faded, the face full
of rest

Of the Earth, of the Mother, my heart with her
heart in accord:

As I lie mid the cool green tresses that mantle her
breast

I begin with the grass once again to be bound to the
Lord.

By the hand of a child I am led to the throne of the
King,

For a touch that now fevers me not is forgotten and
far,

And His infinite sceptred hands that sway us can
bring

Me in dreams from the laugh of a child to the song
of a star.

On the laugh of a child I am borne to the joy of the
King.

Well, when all is said and done
Best within my narrow way,
May some angel of the sun
Muse memorial o'er my clay:

'Here was beauty all betrayed
From the freedom of her state;
From her human uses stayed
On an idle rhyme to wait.

Ah, what deep despair might move
If the beauty lit a smile,
Or the heart was warm with love
That was pondering the while.

He has built his monument
With the winds of time at strife,
Who could have before he went
Written in the book of life.

To the stars from which he came
Empty handed he goes home;
He who might have wrought in flame
Only traced upon the foam.'

THE NUTS OF KNOWLEDGE

'Sinend daughter of Lodan Lucharglan, son of Lir, out of the Land of Promise went to Connlas' Well which is under the sea, to behold it. That is a well at which are the hazels of wisdom and inspiration that is, the hazels of the science of poetry; and in the same hour their fruit and their blossom & their foliage break forth, and then fall upon the well in the same shower, which raises upon the water a royal surge of purple.'

HERE ENDS THE NUTS OF
KNOWLEDGE, WRITTEN
BY A. E., PRINTED, UPON
PAPER MADE IN IRELAND,
AND PUBLISHED BY ELIZ-
ABETH CORBET YEATS AT
THE DUN EMER PRESS, IN
THE HOUSE OF EVELYN
GLEESON AT DUNDRUM
IN THE COUNTY OF DUB-
LIN, IRELAND, FINISHED
ON THE TENTH DAY OF
OCTOBER, IN THE YEAR
NINETEEN HUNDRED &
THREE.

THE
SIXTH
VOLUME
OF
THE
HISTORY
OF
THE
CITY
OF
NEW
YORK
FROM
1784
TO
1790
BY
JOHN
B. HOGGINS
NEW
YORK
1898





